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(1855)

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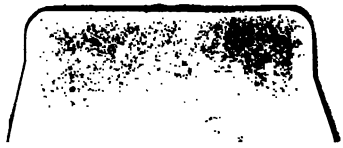


FOWLING,

A

POEM

(IN FIVE BOOKS)

Descriptive of

GROUSE, PARTRIDGE, PHEASANT,

WOODCOCK, DUCK,

AND SNIPE SHOOTING.

"Magnos canibus circumdare saltus."

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL AND W. DAVIES, STRAND.

By J. & E. Hodson, Cross-street.

1808.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The Author of this Volume deems it incumbent on him to declare, that the Poem on Fowling was written, without any view to publication, during the various hours of leisure, afforded by his distant removal from the tiresome tumults of public society. Under the sanction of a few friends, he has been induced to submit it, with its many imperfections, to the inspection of the public; and will think himself amply remunerated, should it be found sufficiently interesting to engage the attention of the reader.

PREFACE.

A Country life, a passion for rural sports, and the beauties of Nature, gave birth to the following Poem, the intended vehicle of perpetuating the memory of scenes and pleasures congenial with the Author's disposition and habits. Mr. Somerville's excellent poem, The Chace, afforded, at once, an incitement and an example. But, in the execution of his plan, the Author has ventured to differ, essentially, from that gentleman. He has not enlarged his work by the introduction of any foreign modes of shooting, and he has avoided all extraneous ornaments, and classical allusions. It was a home scene he wished to delineate, and Nature and Sport were to be the only figures

in the picture. To those who have felt a congenial ardour in the pursuit of their favourite sport, through every season, this will hardly appear to be a disadvantage. They will meet with scenes which, without being precisely the same, will, by a striking resemblance, produce the pleasing recollection of many familiar to them: And they may be led to enhance the pleasures of shooting by seizing the occasions so frequently presented, but generally overlooked, of indulging the purest and most delightful sensations arising from the contemplation of the beauties of Nature. All field sports have been often depreciated and censured, by a train of arguments always unjust, generally contemptible.--- The Author will not here go over beaten ground in a formal justification of them; he will not waste his time in combating preju-

dice and bigotry; on this head he is satisfied with the reflection he has made in the Poem itself, at the beginning of the first book. In truth, it is not for the nature and design of his work that the Author feels any apprehension; it is the execution, alone, of the work which creates a considerable degree of anxiety in his breast. The opinion of an Author himself can never be relied on with safety---the opinion of his friends is little less hazardous. The opinion of the public is the justest, as well as the surest test of his merit or demerit. The Author of the following Poem will not follow the hackneyed mode of imploring favour, or deprecating disapprobation. He will not disgust the liberal mind by meanness and servility. The illiberal he is proud enough to deem beneath his notice; and were he to address it at all, it should be not in his own

words, but in those of the author to whom he is already indebted for a motto; who, in the 17th letter of the 6th book, has forcibly comprised, in a few words, all that could possibly be said upon such an occasion.

BOOK I.

GROUSE SHOOTING.

CONTENTS.

Subject proposed and invocation of Nature. Address to sportsmen in general, and fowlers in particular. Justification of fowling, and reproof of prejudice and false sensibility, with a short admonition to sportsmen not to suffer the prey to linger in dying. Grouse shooting throughout the day described. Morning shooting. Finding the pack, and killing. Reproof of boastful and exaggerating sportsmen. Breaking off at noon, retiring to shelter, and fowler's repast. Vulgar superstition, and belief of the existence of the heath hounds. Simple and pedestrian fowling commended. The grouse described, with directions for shooting. Afternoon shooting—finding and killing. Breaking off at sunset, and return home. Summer evening, with rural sights and sounds. Concludes with the close of day.

FOWLING.

Ipsis est aër avibus non æquus, et illæ
Præcipites altâ vitam sub nube relinquunt.

Virg. Georg. lib. 3.

Mirum est animus agitatione motuque corporis excitatur. Jam undique sylvæ et solitudo, ipsum illud silentium quod venatione datur, magna cogitationis incitamenta sunt. . . . . .

Experieris non Dianam magis montibus quam Minervam inerrare.

Plin. Epist. 6. lib. 1.

BOOK I.

GROUSE SHOOTING.

The pleasing labours of the sylvan war
Wag'd by the fowler on the feather'd race
Through the revolving seasons, summer's heat
And winter's cold, I sing. Assist my song
Nature, great goddess, and if still thy pow'r

From the first dawn of reason my rapt soul
Has duly own'd, if ever to thy name,
Midst woods and wilds and streams, has offer'd up
With sacred rapture vows and incense meet
On altars never rear'd by human hands,
Breathe thy blest influence on my rising strain!
Lovers of Nature, and the cheerful sports
Her wide domain affords! whether the chace
Fill your whole souls, or the swift silent folk
That dwell beneath the wildly wand'ring streams
Oft mixing with the main, call forth your skill,
Attend my lay; let no ungen'rous pride,
No narrow prejudice forbid your hearts
To sympathize with mine, for I your sports
Admire and love. Oft at the dawn of day,
Rous'd by the cheerful horn, my bounding steed

Receives me eager through the doubling chace
O'er hills and vales and far extended plains,
Or deep entangled depth of woods remote,
With joyous heart to press the flying prey.
Nor less when genial spring revives the world
And rising in a robe of fleecy clouds
Spun by the dewy fingers of the south,
The sun begins his course, with silent step
Along the river's misty banks I stray
By many a pebbly ford, or rushing fall,
Or still deep pool by crowding alders screen'd,
And from his chrystal bed the spotted trout
Solicit, or the salmon silver bright.

But chief ye brother sportsmen to my song
Give ear; ye, who the far resounding gun

And faithful dog attending, love,—who chase
Nor o'er the earth, nor through the wat'ry plains
Your game, but through the spacious realms of air
Pursue it, and when vainly deem'd secure
On wind-swift pinions borne, with steady aim
Unerring hurl it to the ground, attend!
Whilst by experience led, the Muse unfolds
Your ever-varying sport; nor that alone,
But ev'ry rural charm shall she pourtray:
Now pausing on some mountain's brow sublime,
Now in some silent glen, or at the source
Of some clear nameless stream, the while she marks
Around her rise ten thousand sights and sounds
Unseen, unheard, unheeded, and unknown;
For she has witness'd oft the earliest dawn
And latest close of day, with ev'ry change,

Through ev'ry season beautiful and new,
Of vale or upland, field or forest wide.

Gen'rous and bold as varied is your sport,
Ye fowlers! manly strength your toils require;
Defiance of the summer's burning sun
And winter's keenest blast, of hail or storm,
Of ice, or driving snow; nor must the marsh
That quivers to your step deter you, nor the brake
That seems impervious, in whose thorny depth
You struggle long, and lose the cheerful day,
'Till bursting through, again the sylvan scene
Tranquil and smooth re-opens to your view.
Well are those toils repaid, when by your side,
Or underneath your crouching spaniel's feet

That strongly manifests his eager joy
With gestures eloquent, you view your prey
With rapt'rous eye,—or when at day's decline
Your bag well fill'd, with step sedate and slow
Along the beaten village path you pass,
As the light lingers in the western sky,
And see far off your dusky home arise.

Be silent Prejudice, nor call our sport
By any term severe;—Bigot forbear;
Nor dare arraign us at your angry bar!
Has the Creator made, himself, the grant
Of ev'ry living thing, fish, fowl or beast,
To lordly man, and shall your vain decree
Annul the grant? And ye, who proudly boast
Of feelings delicate, and most refin'd,

Ye male or female SENSIBILITISTS,
Who shrink and shudder at the fowler's sport,
Yet from your doors unpitied, unreliev'd
Turn the poor vet'ran, whose best blood has stream'd
For your security so ill deserv'd,
Blush and be silent:—blush again with shame.
When you reflect upon the cruel cates
Your tables often yield, with which the Muse
Will not pollute her strain. One only hint
She gives; sportsmen, be merciful in death,
Nor ever let your prey breathe out its life
In ling'ring agonies. Of this no more!
My eager Muse invites you to the field:
What though beneath the lion's sultry sign
The fervid sun scorch the parch'd earth, abroad

Freely along the wide extended moors,
And on the heath-clad mountain unconfin'd
Refreshing breezes blow: thither the grouse
My untir'd footsteps leads, and ere the dews
Collected by the fost'ring night have fled,
I may remit my toil. O let the morn
Ye sportsmen, let the fresh and wholesome morn,
Whether in Summer's frolic robe array'd
Or Winter's soberer garb, still call you forth!
And if the forespent night have witness'd nought
But healthful fare, and modest temp'rate cups,
Lib'ral, yet chasten'd, full without excess,
No bell, nor loud alarum shall you need
To rouse you from your sleep, refresh'd and clear.
And ready for the field. Observe the heavens;
Nor yet disdain the aid of the small tube,

Whose metal sensitive enclos'd foretells
The weather's changes. Should the low'ring skies
And hollow winds proclaim approaching rain,
Midway the mountains hunt: if wilder still
Tempestuous gales and driving mists prevail;
Still lower,—but when all serene and fair,
The face of Nature nought but smiles displays,
Then to the mountains' summits bend your way.
As up the rugged path I press, how wide
The prospect opens, but not here bedeck'd
From Summer's varied and fantastic loom,
But clad in mantle coarse of sober brown
And dusky purple mix'd: one homely hue
Stretches unvaried round, save where some rock
Lifts it's grey forehead furrow'd by the hand
Of ruthless Time; or if the curious eye

A wider circuit take, perchance it marks
Upon the moorland's edge, (deserving note
But as contrasted with the neighb'ring waste)
The green potatoe-ground, with simple fence
Enclos'd, and, at one end, the clay-built cot
Scarce from the heath distinguish'd; not a bush
Shelters the bleak abode. No tow'ring trees
In these rude solitudes diffuse a shade:
Their loss not felt, whilst my observant eye
Follows my ranging setters. How they wind
Along the heading heath! and now they climb
The rocky ridge, where mid the broken crags
The whortle's purple berries peep. "Take heed"
The pack is near at hand; the wary dogs
Draw slowly on. They stand immoveable,
Backing the leader. Now my pulse beat quick

With expectation, but by practice train'd
At once subside, that coolness may assist
My steady aim. Meantime my well-taught dogs
Enjoy their sett: I hie them in: the birds
On sounding pinions rise, and with affright
Swift as the winds make off, yet not so swift
But that the whistling shot o'ertake their flight.
One flutt'ring beats the ground with broken wing
And breast distain'd with blood; the rest far off,
Urg'd on by fear, skim o'er the distant moors,
'Till by the haze obscur'd, my eye no more
Discerns their flight. Vain is their hope of peace,
Their hope of safety vain, tho' by no eye
Observ'd, save the high tow'ring hawks, or larks,
Their fellows of the air; they drop at once,
Then cow'ring run to where the bushy ling

Offers a shelter, or the deep black rut
A safer seeming hold;—each for himself
Seeks a retreat, where still and close he lies,
The thund'ring gun yet sounding in his ears.
Short is your respite! with sagacious nose
My dogs far off shall wind you, 'till at length,
Upon your foot advancing, they denote
With steady sett your hiding place. Again,
Upstarting from the ground, where close they lie
'Till the reloaded gun shall give them leave,
They bound along, and spreading o'er the heath,
With circling footsteps ply their busy work.
Light is my heart with joyful hope elate
As I pursue their course; no careful thoughts
Have room to enter: the cerulean sky,
Th' unclouded sun diffuse a livelier joy;

The very passing breeze, with breath as soft
As youthful virgins breathing purest love,
Whispers delight: nature and health and sport,
Life's chiefest goods, are mine—What need I more?
There, where yon rising hillocks mark the spot,
I saw the pack with wings that seem'd declin'd
And intermitted speed; not far from thence
Perchance they lie; ah no! the rising ground
Must have deceiv'd my eye. Push on my dogs;
Their flight was further still. But Pero stands
With head erect, his fellows strait proclaim
The glad intelligence, distinctly borne
Upon the bosom of the adverse gale.
With steady pace how they draw on, and see
How short that dog has turn'd; with body curv'd

Almost a semicircle there he stands.
Up springs the game, resounds the well-aim'd gun,
And the swift death seals up his swimming eyes.
Soon falls another, and another yet:
By better fortune favor'd one escapes;
The disappointment dwells not on my mind
A moment's space. I boast no magic pow'r
Of universal slaughter, nor pretend
A never failing aim. My soul abhors
The noisy braggart, who with flippant tongue
Rehearses deeds improbable, confirm'd
With loud attesting oaths, that but beget
In the true sportsman's mind a stronger doubt,
Of never missing hand—of many a bird
By various accidents and crosses lost,
Some in impervious brakes, others in floods;

And some with single pellet touch'd, that soar'd
Aloft, and never more were seen—all dead.
Meantime th' unfurnish'd game-bag tells a tale
Of diff'rent import and well understood.
Truth needs no varnish, nor our manly sport
Affected, frothy praise, and falsehood base.
Now forward once again. You mountain's skirts
Shall be our limits; cheerfully we drive
Along the heath; but from the cloudless sky
The sun flames fiercely, and the subject earth
Sickens beneath his noontide beam; the scent
Has greatly sunk;—Now break we off awhile,
'Till his declining rays point more oblique
And mitigated fervor rules the heav'ns.
Meantime to some well shaded cool retreat,
If cool retreat may on these wastes be found,

Retire we to repose our wearied limbs,
And ease the panting dogs; nor shall the time
Be wholly wasted, since the scrip affords
The just supplies that Nature's wants require.
I pity much the man whose palate nice,
And appetite deprav'd, can relish not
A meal so humble; he has never known
A sportsman's ardour, nor his sickly taste,
By choicest viands courted, ever knew
The relish sport and exercise can give
To coarser fare. On yonder rising ground,
Where the huge mass of rocks, ledge upon ledge,
Nature's own hand has pil'd, appears a seat,
Which, as in scorn of mimic art, is form'd
Quadrangular. In Fancy's airy dream,
It might be deem'd some giant's drear abode.

Within, a turf of softer growth appears,
And fresher verdure; the suspending rocks
Afford a welcome shade; no human foot,
Save, haply, of some brother's of the gun,
Has enter'd here; yet here the prowling fox,
When theft-concealing Night has veil'd the world,
With stealthy pace has pass'd: the wary hawk
Upon the topmost crag has chosen oft
His safe and silent seat. Far other forms,
As vulgar tongues by Superstition sway'd
Report, frequent these wilds; for at the hour
Of midnight, loud and fearful sounds are heard;
The heath hounds are abroad, th' infernal pack
Drive o'er the trembling earth; appearance strange
And horrible they wear;—their headless throats
Breathe forth sulphureous flames, nor ever cease

Their dire discordant yells. Woe to the wretch
Whose ears the sound invades;—he flies amain
With super-human strength and speed, yet oft
Stops, and his panting lungs perforce constrains
To stay their hurried beatings, whilst he lists
A dozen seconds, and again pursues
His rapid flight. Yet mid these winding cliffs
I view no tracks, nor shall I fear to draw,
Lest foul infection should have ting'd the wave,
From yonder lucid stream, whose waters pure
Shall temper well the else too potent draught.
The rocky table spread with careless haste:—
Come epicure, and see what it displays.
Dost thou despise the sight?—depart, and seek
Thy more luxurious but unenvied fare.
Yet are there sportsmen, who this simple plan

Could never brook; who when they take their way
To fields or woods, their docile steed bestride,
And issue forth, proud of the num'rous train,
Horses and dogs and men: let each pursue
His fav'rite mode; for me, while bounteous Heav'n
Accords me health, and my firm frame retains
Its wonted vigour, not the wealth of kings
Should change my course, since the laborious toil
Itself is pleasure, and rewards itself.
Now let us view the spoil, erewhile we trust
To be increas'd, the ruffl'd plumage dress,
Remove with careful hand the clotted gore,
That so the maid, to whose lov'd name e'en now
We lift the cup and breathe the heartfelt wish,
As turning to the spot, in Fancy's eye
Alone perceiv'd, our stedfast gaze devours

The pathless waste, may dread not to receive
The off'ring destin'd to her snowy hand.
Amusing sight! to see the prostrate dogs
Rous'd from their unsound slumbers sit erect
Upon their haunches, and with high rais'd ears,
And head one side declin'd, attentive mark
My actions, as I turn the lifeless birds
This way and that. Their eyes so bright of late,
Surmounted by a brow of scarlet fringe,
How dull and heavy now! yet still their plumes
Retain their colour, red and white immix'd,
With transverse bars, and spots of sable hue.
Most common these—yet grouse of other kind
The fowler often finds, of larger growth
And glossy jet, black-game or heath-cock
term'd.

Nor are the red on ev'ry heathy moor
Or rocky mountain found; full many a waste
Wash'd by the southern or the western main,
Has ne'er receiv'd them, though abundant else
In store of footed or of feather'd game.

But in the north the lovely race is found
More frequent; chief where Scotia spreads at large
Her heaths, her mountains, and her glitt'ring lochs,
With piny forests intersected oft,
Primæval Nature, simple and august.
Beneath those deep and solitary shades,
With native freedom blest, the wild deer roves;
The ptarmacan and capperthaily there,
Jealous and shy glide through the verdant gloom.
Upon some rocky mountain's ample side,

His tent the sportsman pitches; day by day
His joyous task pursues, 'till other game
Calls him away to labours less severe,
Mid fertile fields and cultivated plains.
Should the young fowler haply wish to learn,
How best success may crown his ardent hopes,
When on the boundless waste or mountain wild
He seeks the grouse, the friendly Muse shall guide
His dubious course, and teach him how to speed.
Laborious is the sport; no other chace
Within the circling year demands such toil.
With fiercest wrath the fiery orb darts forth
Upon the languid frame, and ev'ry limb
Is bath'd with copious dews; the rugged ground
With tangl'd heath o'erspread, retards the steps;

Whilst rising from the dusky plain immense,
The rocky mountain lifts its frowning head;
Full often to be scal'd, not without pain,
Nor without danger always; rais'd aloft,
The fowler on the craggy summit stands,
And sees below the prospect stretch immense
In the broad sunny glare: at once the heav'ns
Are overcast, and rising thick around,
As by some great magician's potent wand
Compell'd, or dæmon of the troubled air,
Close vapourish mists obscure the darken'd sky.
Tremendous roll the dusky volumes 'round,
And thicken as they roll; the well-known path
Amidst the cliffs has vanish'd; now no more
The cliffs themselves appear; to move is death!
Silent and sad the fowler sits him down,

Nor ought avails but patience, 'till a gale
Propitious, rising with its welcome wing,
Disperse the baleful fog. But not the less,
Ye sportive youths, with fearless heart pursue,
And manly, toil-strung limbs, the grateful chace.
But when you seek your game, those hills attempt,
Cloth'd with the thickest heath, whose shelt'ring sides
From the sun's scorching rays, or parching winds
Protect th' assembl'd birds: when heat prevails
With unabated and imperious sway,
And the cleft earth gasps with devouring drought,
The hollows, where the cool and clust'ring moss
Proclaims the secret, subterraneous stream,
Perchance your footsteps shall invade, the spot
Where the shy pack their early meal have ta'en;

In vain you beat around, your trusty dogs
Labour in vain, and disappointed leave
The tainted ground. You blame your tardy steps
Or luckless stars,—but would your eyes be blest
With the glad sight of the quick springing birds,
To yonder riv'let take your instant way,
Whose lazy wave scarce wanders thro' the moor;
The feather'd family there lave their bills,
With juicy berries stain'd and soil impure,
And slake their thirst at will. Spare not your toil;
For oft the grouse shall quit their usual haunts,
By wond'rous instinct taught, great Nature's work,
Before approaching storms, though not a cloud
Has dimm'd the heav'ns, and in their airy caves

Slumber the loud tongu'd winds. Should th
moist ground,
Damp'd by preceding show'rs that fell unseen
In the deep silence of the drowsy night,
Forbid the birds to lie, long is their flight,
As down the wind with vig'rous wing they sweep;
Behoves you then despise the painful march
With eager speed o'er the vast open heath,
Th' opposing hill, the rugged steep descent,
The gaping fissure, or the deep morass.
Unwearied patience, persevering toil
Alone can crown the fowler's eager hopes,
Whate'er the season, or whate'er the sport;
But chiefly here: yet worthy is the game;
For who that tastes th' intoxicating joy,

When falling fast around, on either hand
It beats the sounding earth, regrets his pains?
Cease Muse your lecture; for the sloping Sun
Has lost his pow'r, we linger here too long.
Come then my faithful dogs, yet once again
Buoy'd with delightful hopes let us proceed.
But whither shall we lead? th' expansive waste
Is free to traverse; but where lies the game
What shall inform? These are no Scotish hills
In grouse abounding—push we on the while,
And Fortune favor us. How fast the moors
Recede beneath my feet! The rocky height
Where late I sat, I view with doubtful eye,
Nor know it for the same; whilst other hills
And other plains around me rise immense,
Unbated Hope still leads me on, though deep

In the clear western sky sinks the broad sun,
And time more precious seems to fly more fast.
Must I then turn, nor see th' unerring dogs
Again declare the game? Yet will I try
Yon much inviting hill, whose craggy points
Or food or shelter yield; with busy nose,
On ev'ry rising ridge the dogs pursue
Their eager search; their search alas is vain!
But hold! Did I not mark that farthest dog
Stop in his course mid-way? He stops again:—
On either side they stop, as to the earth
Their feet were rooted: "Steady to your setts!"
There springs the first, and parent of the pack.
Short is his flight; he dies; nor he alone
Dies unaccompanied; around him falls
His num'rous progeny; sport triumphs now,

And crowns the closing day with full success.
The work is done: and see, the setting sun
But lingers on the brow of yon dark hill
Empurpl'd with his beams, to bid farewell.
Farewell great orb of day! content I view
Thy fiery disk forsake our hemisphere,
Conveying light and life to other climes.
How still is all around! no human sounds,
Nor low of wand'ring herds, nor bleat of sheep
Break the deep silence of these wastes remote.
The spoil secur'd, with joyous heart I leave
The solitary scene, to join once more
In the far distant vales my fellow men;
Though heavy laden, yet more light my step
Than if with empty bag I took my way.

And you my trusty dogs, well have you work'd,
Nor shall you fail of the well earn'd reward,
The plenteous mess, the wholesome bed of straw,
Where quick repose shall close your weary eyes.
There lies my way, betwixt those hills that rise
On either side, and form a hollow pass,
And pointing to the western sky, reflect
The sun's departed rays. Yet once again
I turn, and in the changing east, remark
The ev'ning shades their filmy vapours draw
Across the blue expanse. Whilst in the west,
Deep azure yet surmounts the saffron robe
That clothes the smiling heav'ns. How sweet to mark,
As down the heath I wind, the distant scene

Unfolding by degrees: at first appear
The blue topp'd hills with floating vapours
crown'd,
Drawn from the vale beneath; the spiral wreath
Of smoke ascending through the tranquil air,
Its source unseen, 'till the close crowding trees
Denote the shelter'd farm that lies below.
How fast each well known object now recurs!
The grassy slope, the winding shrubby lane,
The clatt'ring mill; and now at large display'd,
The village rises to my gladden'd eye.
Here let me pause upon this ancient stile
O'ergrown with moss, and Nature's charms survey,
Clad in her ev'ning robe; and let my ear
Catch the sweet rural sounds that float around.
From yon tall elm that decks the meadow's hedge,

Perch'd on its topmost bough the tuneful thrus
Pours forth his mellow lay; across the lane
The milk-maid carols blithe her ballad strain; 4
Whilst many a mingl'd sound of flocks and her
And village swains remote invades the ear.

But hark! what melody is this, that bursts
Upon my ravish'd sense? the rustic youths,
Their daily labour done, in yon grey tow'r 4
Ring round the tuneful peal. I love the strain
Whether its merry morning notes proclaim
The plighted vows of some unpolish'd pair,
Or chiming slow, as now, with frequent pause
Chaunt a sweet requiem to the dying day. 48
The peal has ceas'd. The rustic youths repair
With hasty foot each to his simple home.

Come dumb companions; let us homeward tend,
Through the fast gath'ring shades, that early rest
With renovated strength may fill our frames; 485
And when to-morrow dawns we shall renew
With light and jocund hearts our cheerful sport.

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING.

CONTENTS.

The approach of the season for partridge shooting, with the successive changes in the appearance of the country described. Request to countrymen to be careful not to injure the partridge's nest, and the young birds. Arrival of the first of September. Going out in the morning. Appearance of the country and sun-rise. Finding the covey and killing. Judgement and experience supply the place of the marker. Carefully and diligently beating the ground. Trying back. Finding the birds in the hedge-rows. Pushing forward. Hospitality of the farmer to the fair sportsman. Hunting in standing corn reprobated. A slight and hasty refreshment in the fields recommended, in preference to returning to dinner, and going out again in the afternoon. Fowlers not to be selfish and ungenerous, or repine at each other's success. British freedom secured by salutary law. Long beat. Finding the covey at water. Rising out of gun-shot. After refreshing, patience and perseverance in the pursuit. Finding the covey in the stubbles on their afternoon feed. Killing and marking into the brakes, with successful termination of the day's sport. A country where birds are moderately plenty, preferred to shooting in preserves. Expectation and labour true sources of the sportsman's joys. Directions to young fowlers for partridge shooting. Return home by moon-light, with reflections.

BOOK II.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING.

SEPTEMBER comes to cheer the fowler's heart,
And raise his anxious hopes; day after day
He marks the fruitful country change around
With eager eye. First from the fertile meads,
Divested of their widely waving load,
The fragrant hay-rick rises. Gentle swains,
If chance should lead you to the chosen spot,
Where the shy partridge forms her simple nest,
The embryo offspring spare; and, when your scythe

Levels the grassy vallies, should your foot
Approach the helpless brood, step back with care
Nor our fond hopes destroy: the trusty cur
That nightly guards your house, or in the field
Protects your vestments and your frugal fare,
Whilst far from home you ply your mid-day
work,
Permit not to approach:—so may success
And plenty wait upon your rustic toils,
And crown the circling year with joyful gains.
As nearer now the sportive season comes,
The fowler marks the corn-fields change around
From green to yellow; 'till the potent sun
Embrowns the nodding ear. When ev'ning comes
He walks around, and carefully surveys

The promis'd grounds, and ev'ry well-known haunt
Of the coy game recalls; whilst warm Desire,
By Fancy fir'd, Time's narrow limits bursts,
Or the dull interval, impatient, chides.
Should he some spot between thick shelt'ring woods
Espy, where, in long range, the clust'ring shocks
O'erspread the ground, a livelier joy invades
His beating heart, and with no niggard praise
He loads the skilful farmer's early care.
But when the jolly harvest o'er the plains
Diffusive reigns at large, his joy is full,
And mingles with the mirth that cheers the scene.
Welcome to him the busy sickle's sound
Among the rustling fields, or sweeping scythe;

Welcome the laugh, the shout, and noise confus'd,
That from the early dawn to day's decline,
Load ev'ry swelling gale. He joins the throng,
Partakes their pleasures, and foretells his own.
Then not alone he walks; beside him wait
Attentive to his voice, of aspect grave
His trusty pointers, soon to be indulg'd
In the full freedom of their fav'rite sport.
At length arrives the glad important eve;
To-morrow from the strict, but just restraint
Let loose, th' unshackl'd fowler shall rejoice.
What joyous hurry, and what pleasing cares
Through Britain's coasts prevail; from east to west,
From north to south, continuous they extend;
What region, or what district so unblest,

Where the prolific partridge is unknown,
Or eager fowlers doom them not to death?
For me, before the welcome hour arrives,
What wild emotions agitate my breast!
Sleep oft forsakes my couch, or should its dews
My heavy eye-lids bathe, in dreams I view
Th' expected covies, and the happy morn
Rises with all its joys before my eyes.
Come, long anticipated hour, oh come!
Depart, ye envious shades of Night, and thou
Fair Dawn arise, and o'er the humid world,
With rosy fingers lead the cheerful Day!
The envious shades of Night are fled, and now
I see the Dawn with rosy fingers, lead
The cheerful Day along the eastern sky;
And as his steps advance, the Heav'ns receive

The welcome stranger with a deeper blush.
Farewell, my couch! your downy arms no more
Retain my limbs; let Gluttony or Sloth,
Or helpless Age, or languid pale Disease,
Slumber the morn away, and lose the fresh
And wholesome hours: impatient for the field,
Without regret I leave your close embrace.
My hasty meal dispatch'd, I seize my gun
And issue forth; from their clean kennels loos'd
My pointers meet me, and with unfeign'd joy,
Around me bound impatient, as I trace
The rocky lane to yonder rising ground.
Sweet is the hour of morn, and Nature's face
Beneath her influence, sweet in ev'ry scene;
E'en on the barren waste, but how much more
Amid these fertile fields, and woody vales,

Where the rich scene with interchange of charms
Enchants the eye; the verdure of the mead,
The upland brown, clear'd of it's golden load,
And shady nook that yet demands the aid
Of the warm sun to change the waving corn.
Not a wild flow'r that lifts it's modest head
Upon the mossy hedge, or vagrant spray
With pearly dew imboss'd, or humblest blade,
But to my eye the form of Beauty wears.
Here wantons wild the vegetable world
In native pride profuse, nor has the year
That pride with stern and chilling frown yet
check'd.
Ah! what a glorious sight! the rising sun,
That slowly lifts his head above yon wood,
Gilding each trembling leaf of varied green

Along the topmost ridge; whilst far below
The grey of early morn with floating mists
Conjoin'd, slow rising from the brawling stream,
Enwraps each dark and venerable trunk.
The mountain glistens in the orient ray;
And in the vale, rous'd by the distant view
Of the glad promis'd beam, the flocks and herds
In grateful concert hail the rising day.
Nor are the hedges silent; many a throat
Still chaunts the beauties of the waning year.
But the lov'd joys at hand, permit no more
My eye to wander o'er the sylvan scene;
Full of th' expected sport my heart beats high,
And with impatient step I haste to reach
The stubbles, where the scatter'd ears afford
A sweet repast to the yet heedless game.

How my brave dogs o'er the broad furrows bound,
Quart'ring their ground exactly. Ah! that point
Answers my eager hopes, and fills my breast
With joy unspeakable. How close they lie!
Whilst to the spot with steady pace I tend,
Now from the ground with noisy wing they burst,
And dart away. My victim singl'd out,
In his aërial course falls short, nor skims
Th' adjoining hedge o'er which the rest unhurt
Have pass'd. Now let us from that hedge
Survey with heedful eye the country round;
That we may bend our course once more to meet
The scatter'd covey; for no marker waits
Upon my steps, though hill and valley here,
With shrubby copse, and far extended brake

Of high grown furze, alternate rise around.
But judgment and experience shall supply
The marker's place; the labour we despise;
But let the sportive work be all our own.
Inviting is the view,—far to the right
In rows of dusky green, potatoes stretch,
With turnips mingl'd of a livelier hue.
Towards the vale, fenc'd by the prickly furze
That down the hill irregularly slopes,
Upwards they seem'd to fly; nor is their flight
Long at this early season. Let us beat,
With diligence and speed restrain'd, the ground,
Making each circuit good; nor rashly drive
From field to field, whilst far behind the game
Lies undisturb'd, and disappointment mocks
The fruitless toil. At ev'ry step I take

The wish'd for bird before me seems to rise;
And should a dog turn quickly in his course,
As quickly turn my steps; my ready hands
Half raise the gun impulsively to shoot.
Still on we pass through thickly crowding stems
Our pains yet unrepaid: the turnips next
Demand our steps: nor in the turnips lie
The cautious birds. What course shall we pursue?
The new shorn fields here spread around, and next,
Luxuriant clover clothes the fertile land.
Shall we that clover try, or further on
For other covies range excursive round?
Not there I deem our search would meet success,
Too distant from their feeding ground the spot.
Nor would I imitate their heedless haste

Or quick impatience, who at the first check
Resign the toil, and forward press with hopes
Unauthoris'd and vain; 'till at the end
Of the long day, they mourn their fault too late;
But let us rather on our steps return;
The brakes are yet untried, the grass-fields too,
May in their hedge-rows hide the skulking game.
And thither will we first, to spare the dogs,
And spare ourselves perchance a needless toil.
We shun no labour that our sport requires,
But hold it folly to expend our pow'rs
Where none occasion calls. Could we but see
Once more the flutt'ring wing of speckl'd brown!
That wish shall soon be realiz'd; for there,
Near yonder hedge-row where high grass and ferns

The secret hollow shade, my pointers stand.
How beautiful they look! with outstretch'd tails,
With heads immoveable and eyes fast fix'd,
One fore leg rais'd and bent, the other firm,
Advancing forward, presses on the ground!
Convolv'd and flutt'ring on the blood-stain'd earth,
The partridge lies:—thus one by one they fall,
Save what with happier fate escape untouch'd,
And o'er the open fields with rapid speed
To the close shelt'ring covert wing their way.
When to the hedge-rows thus the birds repair,
Most certain is our sport; but oft in brakes
So deep they lie, that far above our head
The waving branches close, and vex'd we hear
The startl'd covey one by one make off.

Now may we visit some remoter ground;
My eager wishes are insatiate yet,
And end but with the sun; yet happy he,
Who ere the noontide beams inflame the skies,
Has bagg'd the spoil; with lighter step he treads,
Nor faints so fast beneath the scorching ray.
The morning hours well spent, should mighty toil
Require some respite, he content can seek
Th' o'er-arching shade, or to the friendly farm
Betake him, where with hospitable hand
His simple host brings forth the grateful draught
Of honest home-brew'd beer, or cider cool.
Such friendly treatment may each fowler find
Who never violates the farmer's rights,
Nor with injurious violence, invades
His fields of standing corn. Let us forbear

Such cruel wrong, though on the very verge
Of the high waving field our dogs should point.
Thanks to these cooling clouds, that from the south
Across the heav'ns their vapourish mantle draw,
By the fresh breeze accompanied; to-day
We shall not need from our entrancing sport
A long cessation. Some high mossy bank,
Or thick grown hedge, or root of ancient oak
Well over-canopied, will serve us now
To snatch the hasty morsel, and allay
The wants of Nature, 'till the night shall yield
A more profuse repast. Let those who scorn
Our simple mode betake them to their homes,
In the full meal indulge, and quaff the juice
Of the high flavour'd grape: then to the fields

Forth issuing again renew their sport.
But are their frames more brac'd than our's, their hands
More steady to direct the fatal aim?
Shall such sweet ease at night repay their toils,
Or shall to-morrow's dawn more cool and light
Invite them to the joyous sport again?
Avaunt Reflection! Let our unbent mind
And careless heart luxuriate in delight,
As o'er these velvet downs we take our way,
And view well pleas'd the open champaign round;
How grateful is the change from the fierce glare
To the soft hue that overspreads the scene!
That scene how rich and varied! Nature spreads
Her various treasures round with lib'ral hand,
Bidding the fruitful vallies laugh and sing,

Whilst far beyond, the deep blue hills shut in
The smiling landscape with a native fence;
The cheerful voice of Industry pervades
And animates the whole. Oft, too, the sound
Of the loud gun re-echoing strikes my ear.
Without regret I hear it, nor repine
Should like success on others toils attend.
Be banish'd from the sportsman's breast, to dwell
With sordid Avarice, with Rapine vile,
Or Envy pale, or moody Discontent;
Th' ungen'rous selfish spirit, that beholds
The joys of others with malignant eye.
In eastern climes, curs'd with despotic sway,
Let tyranny through ev'ry rank of life,
With poison'd palate feast on human pain;
But oh, let Freedom in this happy land,

Still in the common happiness rejoice;
Whilst salutary laws and just restraints
Preserve her glorious blessings from abuse.
Grudge not, ye sportsmen, then, a brother's joys,
Nor deem the various prey, the fields, the woods,
The heathy wilds or rushy lakes afford,
Too scanty for us all. Away, my dogs!
Let us yon brakes explore of humbler growth,
With grassy spots diversified, that join
The fields above, whose sandy soil invites
The wand'ring covey; there perchance they bask
Oft in the sunny ray with social glee;
See here their feathers in the hollow pits
Their feet have left. Now through the brakes we press,
Yet find them not. Deep in the vale below,

Lies a long rushy moor with wand'ring rills
Cross'd many a way: 'Tis now the hour of noon,
There haply may they lie. Hope once again
Revives, as down the hill I quickly wind.
But here a common fortune of the sport
Betides me; ere my silent steps can gain
The wish'd for spot, a straggling bird discerns
My near approach, and with his sounding wing
Alarms his fellows; fast they rise around,
And through yon op'ning glade whirl swift away.
Droop not, my faithful dogs; though Fortune now
Frowns adverse, she may shortly smile again.
What though the long rank grass and matted weeds
Impede our steps, and, rising from the marsh,
Yon 'tangl'd thicket would arrest our course!

Nought shall withstand us, whilst the faintest spark
Of hope illumes our way. In the clear stream
Quench ye your thirst; whilst on this sedgy bank,
Nor discontented, nor dishearten'd yet,
I sit me down, and snatch my hasty meal.
Should we no more the sounding covey raise,
The day is not inglorious; but we trust
Yet to be swell'd with joys. Once more we move,
And fast the landscape alters. From the vale
Emerging, now we breathe a purer air.
Where will the fond pursuit our footsteps lead?
Far, far behind our well-known hills arise,
And ev'ry fav'rite haunt; whilst scenes unknown
And unfrequented, rise as fast before.
Whilst many a spreading circuit thus we take,
Fast in his clouded car the sun declines,

And robs the jealous day of half his due.
But one resource remains—the covies now
Are on their feed again; without delay
Strait to the stubbles let us bend our steps.
Those rising furrows first shall be essay'd,
Whose bed of ranker grass, with weeds immix'd,
Old inmates of the soil, shall from the game
Screen our advancing steps. O, if there dwell
In airy region or the concave earth,
Dæmon or genius of the sylvan sport,
May he be present and propitious now!
How fear and hope alternately preside,
As with keen eye I watch th' industrious dogs.
Triumph again! at once their course is stopp'd,
And from opposing quarters fix'd, they point

Tow'rds the same spot: Death hovers o'er his prey;
For scarce the gun has levell'd with the ground
The fated bird, ere in th' adjacent brake
I mark the rest drop in: fallacious hope
The trembling covey mocks, for not a spot
Within my ken a fairer prospect yields:
Low is the cover, intersected well
With narrow sheep paths, and I mark'd the birds
Wide scatt'ring as they fell. Just are my hopes,
And the full tide of pleasure swells my soul
To ecstacy, as each succeeding bird
That drops around with eager hand I seize.
Where is our labour now, where our fatigue?
The weary limbs, to sudden strength restor'd,
Light and elastic move: nor ought imports

The long protracted way,—such mighty pow'r
Success possesses o'er the fowler's breast.
Well have we sped to-day, and well commenc'd
Our glad career; bright dawn of future days,
That ere the fervid sun his furious course
Has known to check, ere yon green flaunting leaves
Have put their sober autumn liv'ry on,
Shall fill th' appointed season duly up.
Nor shall we envy those whom Fate has plac'd
In richer districts, or more fertile plains;
Those least, whose lordly lands are overstock'd,
And ev'ry field a num'rous covey yields,
As common as the tame domestic tribe
That waits around their house. What is it fills
With such transporting joys the sportsman's breast,

For as the season wanes, the birds grow wild,
Whilst on the juicy blades of the young wheat
In open fields they feed, and speed away
Long ere you reach the ground. Yet would I, then,
Though hopeless of their death, amongst them send
The volley'd shot, that might perchance curtail
Their flight, and send them scatt'ring to the brakes.
Yet let no arbitrary rules repress
Your youthful ardour, or your genius damp,
For diff'rent countries diff'rent modes require;
Borrow of others, 'till experience guide
Your certain course, and lead you to success.
The game-bag slung, shoulder'd the trusty gun,
Now homeward let us turn with steady march,
And careless vacant mind dispos'd to peace;

Or in the fading landscape prone to mark
Each pleasing object of the lengthen'd way.
How grateful and refreshing is the hour!
The whisp'ring breeze, soft as the cygnet's down,
Wafts o'er my face its sweetly welcome breath,
With fragrant odours, from each dewy hedge
Or fresh'ning field, replete. Ye hapless tribes,
Who pent in crowded cities, never taste
Nature's best gifts, that charm the soften'd soul,
And bless the human frame with health and strength;
As at this sweet and silent hour of eve
I take my lonely way, how more than mean,
How vain and poor seem all your boasted joys
Of gay society—where hollow smiles
Hide heartfelt misery, where friendship's name,

That should be sacred in the mouths of all,
Polluted by the flatt'ring tongue of guile,
Runs round the polish'd circle; where the pow'r
Of av'rice, in amusement's borrow'd dress,
Inflates the ranc'rous heart. Far, far from me
For ever be your tinsel and your glare,
Your loud pretended mirth and secret grief,
Whilst health and sport, and a few chosen friends,
In the deep rural scene are haply mine.
Faint and more faint in the light floating shades
The distant landscape grows, and in the gloom
Retiring, melts away; 'till half perplex'd
And doubtful of my way, with earnest eye
I scrutinize my path. But soon a guide
Benignant, that no sordid fee demands,
Shall lead me to my home. O'er yon hill-top

Whose dusky line just mingles with the sky,
Shoots up a beaming light, like the faint gleam
Of dying embers. Yet to them unlike,
It grows and deepens—'tis the welcome moon,
Whose cheering ray has often been my friend,
And oft may be again. With what a grace
She slowly rises through the fleecy clouds,
That bow before the lovely queen of night!
Sweet is the robe, that o'er the cherish'd world
She mildly spreads; her soft peculiar light
Restores the scene, but chang'd from what it was;
Each harsher feature soften'd and subdu'd,
And ev'ry beauty mellow'd and improv'd.
The glitt'ring streams, the meads, the checquer'd woods,
Contrasted light and shade put forth their charms,

Beneath the influence of her summer reign.
Nor are the herds unmark'd, at ease reclin'd
In the full pastures, or the wav'ring smoke
From the low cottage, that as soon as seen,
Melts from the sight. Meantime the careless mind
Wanders romantic through some fairy land,
'Till startl'd from its dream by the blithe notes
Of rustic swains returning from their toil,
And chaunting unrestrain'd their harvest-song.
Well could I linger in this rocky lane,
And listen to the lay. But though the mind
Be wakeful and untir'd, tho wearied frame
Requires refreshment, and the healing pow'r
Of sweet and balmy sleep, that may again
Prepare us for the pleasures of the field.

END OF BOOK II.

BOOK III.

PHEASANT SHOOTING.

CONTENTS.

Pheasants not to be found in every part of the country. Their tameness in parks and preserves, disgusting to a sportsman. Of the choice of dogs for pheasant-shooting. The pointer preferred, with silence in beating the woods. Encomium on the season and October. Thomson fond of Autumn. Tribute to the Robin. Going out in the morning. Trying the turnips and hedge-rows first. Beating in cover. Finding and killing. Retiring to relieve and water the dog. Natural reflections. Country life preferred to a town one. Address to British parents, advising them to initiate their offspring in field-sports, and advantages of so doing. Self-congratulation, on enjoying the pleasures of a country life. Various forest sights and sounds. Renewing the sport, and following it with unequal success. Sun-set and clear evening denoting frost. Effect of evening in a forest. Pheasants going to roost. Approaching darkness. Star-light. The danger of vulgar prejudices early imbibed. Quitting the woods, and returning home.

BOOK III.

PHEASANT SHOOTING.

FROM the wild mountain and the heathy waste,
Where, in defiance of the burning sun,
With persevering foot he sought the grouse;
From new-shorn fields, where the rich harvest grew,
And the shy partridge glean'd her sweet repast,
To tangl'd copses, and wide spreading woods,
The fowler comes. Another sport invites
His fond pursuit. The gaudy pheasant spreads
His many colour'd plumes, and as he bursts

From the deep shade, inspires the eager wish
To make the rich and lovely prize our own.

Thrice happy he, who in the chosen clime,
And near the groves, the pheasant's lov'd abodes,
Fortune has plac'd; or with benignant pow'r,
Has largely giv'n to wander at his will.
For not in ev'ry forest shall be found
The stately game; full many a fowler's eye,
With keenest ardour beaming, ne'er has seen
The gay capricious birds, that not the less,
In the wide lordly park or long preserves
Tame, but disgusting to the soul of sport,
Perch in the neighb'ring trees, or by the side
Of the smooth gravel walk securely lie.
Yet liberty and freedom unrestrain'd,

Best suit the pheasant, multiply his race,
And to it's highest value bring the breed.
But still be their's the care, and their's alone,
Whose highest pleasures from the table spring,
To rear, improve, and cultivate the game;
But be it our's, and ev'ry son's of sport,
In the deep woods to seek our mighty joys,
And seek the praise our earnest toils deserve.

Oft undecided is the choice of dogs,
To push the pheasant from his close retreat.
The questing spaniel some prefer, and some
The steady pointer; whilst the use of both
Is tried by others. In the earliest days
Of the glad season, to the woods they lead
Their noisy spaniels, whose wide ranging feet

And echoing voices rouse the startl'd birds,
E'en in their deepest holds. But when the game
More shy and cautious grows, they use alone
The well-bred pointer.—But none other dog
Shall e'er attend upon my steps, or late
Or early in the season; when I beat
With vigilant and silent care the woods,
Though not so many a wing shall to the eye
Unfold its pinion, in the fatal range
Of the resounding gun shall more arise.

Hail lovely season of the changing year!
What varied beauties clothe the mellow scene
Beneath October's reign! The wand'ring eye,
Incessant roves around o'er fields and woods,
And orchards gay, with blushing fruit adorn'd.

Ten thousand rich harmonious tints prevail
Through all the vegetable world, and shew
Nature's inimitable hand in all.
To borrow from her pencil, to enrich
His glowing canvass, with observant eye
Forth walks the painter, whilst the poet seeks
The rural scene, to teach his strain to breathe
By inspiration's force a sweeter note.
Thee, Bard of Nature, the revolving year
That hast so sweetly sung, thee, Autumn mild,
Mellifluous Thomson, fill'd with chief delight
On some still day, when deep repose enchains
The loud discordant winds, how sweet a calm
Pervades the scene, as Nature's self repos'd
Through all her varied works, and whisper'd rest
To restless toilsome man!—The annual song

Of birds has nearly ceas'd, though one, whose song
To me is full of music, chaunts aloud
His cheerful strain. Sweet robin! oft to catch
Thy grateful song, my footsteps have I stay'd
Beside some ancient wood, or nearer home
Have heard thee pour thy pleasing melody
From ivy-mantl'd arch, or straggling branch
Of self-sown ash on the high ruin'd wall.
And when an elvish boy, on plunder bent,
In Spring I search'd the hedge with eager eye:
If chance e'er led me to thy mossy nest,
My hands forbore to seize the tempting prize,
That spar'd that prize alone. Ne'er would I set
For thee the treach'rous springle in the snow,
But gladly feed thee with the scatter'd crumbs.

Or when an awkward lad, I first essay'd
To use my gun, and urg'd my petty sport
'Mid hawthorn bushes in the shelter'd lane,
Thy scarlet breast was as a seven-fold shield,
To guard thee from my shot. Such warm regard
Had early note of thy domestic turn,
And piteous fable of the murder'd babes,
Beneath a simple grave of gather'd leaves,
In solitary forest deep interr'd
By thee, engender'd in my childish breast.
Still charm me with thy song; my care shall be
To guard thy person, and relieve thy wants.

Now for the sport equipp'd, once more I take
To the wide-spreading woods my joyous way:
Hope sweetly whispers to my mind success.

One old and trusty pointer at my side
Attends, and conscious of the destin'd joy,
Oft eyes with earnest gaze the distant shades.
Yet, ere we pierce the forest's deep recess,
Let us the skirting hedge-rows well explore,
And yon thick field of verdant turnips beat.
Then well content, nor doubtful if we left
In open ground the game, with patient toil
Through the close tangl'd covert shall we press.
There doubtless shall we find the lazy nide,
That by no droppings of th' o'er-arching trees
Disturb'd, in their warm shelter still remain.
Forward! my faithful dog; for here we waste
The precious hours in vain. Here at this gap,
Here will we enter, where the yellow leaves,
The first pale off'rings of the trembling woods

To tyrant Winter, by his servile slaves
Eurus, and Boreas gather'd, strew the ground.
Now put your vigour forth, my old ally,
And round this op'ning glade, with circling steps
The clust'ring thickets range. Ah! there they rise.
One hap'ly comes this way. The gun resounds.
I saw him fall beneath the mossy branch
Of that wide-spreading oak. Yes, there he lies.
His vivid plumage, like an heap of gems
On a coarse carpet spread, seems all too rich
For the rough russet ground on which it lies.
Fellows in death, as of the self-same wood
Inhabitants, which idly they suppos'd
Their own peculiar and secure abode,
Soon others fall. With fierce desire enflam'd
Of further sport, I force my eager way

Through all impediments. Nor pointed thorns
That threaten from above, nor from below
The stubborn bramble, rooted deep in earth,
That would detain my steps, can ought avail.
Thus through the yielding woods I drive along,
With various fortune. Oft the whirring bird
Eludes my threaten'd aim; or makes escape
From the fast following shot, by num'rous boughs
Half intercepted: oft th' unwelcome hen,
Secure from danger of the sounding gun,
Rises before me. But enough for me
The spoils I gain. Nor would I stay my sport,
But that my weary dog needs, and deserves
A short cessation from his toil severe,
And the cool draught to brace his languid frame.
Deep in the centre of this mazy wood,

I know a pool, which, fed by secret streams,
Unseen, that issue from beneath, winds off
With silent stealthy course 'mid the long grass,
And the green rushes that surround its bed.
Thither we take our way through many a path,
By old experience known, but ne'er the less
Try well the ground between. My faithful dog,
What can requite thy merits! though thou long'st
To taste the cooling stream, that tempting lies
Full in thy sight, thou turn'st aside to try
The thicket on its brink, and there thou stand'st,
Denoting with fix'd point the hidden game.
There! at thy feet it lies outstretch'd in death.
With careful nose thou turn'st it o'er and o'er;
Then gladly speed'st to taste the cooling stream.

Now come thy ways,—and whilst beneath this beech
I sit reclin'd and ruminate at ease,
Or draw my simple viands from my scrip,
Stretch'd at my feet enjoy refreshing sleep.

How noble is the look of this deep wood,
That rears its lofty crest above the high'st
And proudest domes of man! Here Nature reigns
In simple majesty. O thoughtless man,
That on the wholesome forest turn'st thy back,
And crowd'st in smoky towns; that long'st for life,
Yet thine own life contract'st: with eager foot
That follow'st pleasure, yet with senseless act
Beget'st and multipliest thy cares! can wealth

Prolong thy days; can sounding titles soothe
Thy care-worn soul to rest; thy mad pursuit
Of worldly vanities, will it afford
Such lasting joys as the sweet sylvan chace?
But if the world's wide theatre demand
Variety of actors, drop awhile
Thy chosen part, and in the rural scene
Recruit thy frame, and recreate thy mind.
Ah no! the force of early habit cramps
The biass'd soul, nor grants it to enjoy
Impartial Nature's pure and perfect gifts:
O then, deny not to your youthful sons,
Parents of Britain, ev'ry rural sport.
Give them to back the steed, and through the chace
To wind their fearless way—to wield the gun

On moor or mountain, or in thorny depth
Of forest intricate; nor less to seek,
'Mid slipp'ry rocks, and hoarse-resounding floods,
The noblest tenants of the stream. Then Health
Shall brace their vig'rous frames, and Cheerfulness,
Health's handmaid, fill their souls with harmless joys.
And oft retiring from life's busy walk,
From glorious toils of war by sea or shore,
Or serious civil cares, or deep pursuit
Commercial, to their native homes awhile;
With what redoubl'd ardour shall they seek
Their ancient sportive haunts, rejoic'd to think,
Their early years the grateful habit gain'd.
Tremble not, tender mothers, at the toils
Or dangers of the sportsman; early use

And gradual, shall subdue the pow'r of toil,
And strengthen, not impair the youthful frame.
Danger, by prudent knowledge and advice,
Or wise example of some steady friend,
Averted, soon shall dwindle down to nought.
And longer may you see your manly sons
Surround your chair, or when infirm with age
You need support, that kind support afford,
Than if, in early youth, with ill-judg'd care,
Like hot-house plants you rear'd your tender race,
Then turn'd it out in the pestif'rous town
To seek amusement at the swelt'ring ball,
Or breathe in theatres infectious air.
Nor shall so soon insidious Vice corrupt
The stripling, on his rustic sport intent,
As the gay idler, in whose listless mind,

The busy fiend Temptation gains with ease
A ready entrance, and a fix'd abode.
Thanks to th' indulgent stars that, far remov'd
From the loud din of the wild jarring world,
Its misnam'd pleasures and its real cares,
In the sequester'd vale 'midst woods and streams
And rocky mountains plac'd my happy lot,
At equal distance from the worldling's state,
Or solitary hermit's; free to taste
The truest blessings of society,
And its worst evils haply to escape.
And blest those early habits, that impress'd
My youthful mind, and taught me to adore
The charms of Nature, and the sylvan toil.
No tedious hours hang heavy on my hands;
Nor dreading e'er the fiercest Summer's sun,

Nor shrinking from the Winter's keenest blast,
Listless I doze the weary hours away;
But exercise, improv'd by the keen sport
That fills and agitates my eager mind,
With healthful joys beguiles the fleeting day.
E'en here, extended on the verdant moss
That clothes the twisted roots of this tall tree,
What tranquil pleasure soothes my careless mind!
Whilst all that meets the eye or strikes the ear
Harmonious mingling, swells the woodland scene.
Nor the soft whisper of the passing gale
Amidst the trembling leaves, nor various hues
Those leaves that sweetly paint, nor sights nor sounds
Inanimate, alone unite to please.

Borne on the breeze, from the high-furrow'd field,
The ploughman's steady chaunt to his slow team
Monotonous, I mark. The blackbird pipes
From the green holly; then with thoughtless wing
Close glances by my side; but wheeling short,
Alters his course, and shrieking as he flies,
Proclaims his groundless fears. The little wren
Flits on from branch to branch, 'till o'er my head
With tail erect and nodding head, he vents
Chatt'ring, his anger at intrusive man.
Above, with circling flight, the rav'nous kite
Sails o'er the wood, and stooping oft,
Brushes the topmost boughs, and with keen eye
Explores the ground beneath; 'till hither led
By chance, he startles at my dang'rous form,

Flaps his wide wings, and quickly soars aloft.
Through wither'd grass and ferns the whitethroat creeps,
Oft stopping to inhale the scented air
With eager nose; then fast, with foot as light
As falling leaf, he nimbly winds away.
These each well pleas'd in turn I mark, nor scorn
The feeble remnant of the insect race,
That flutter'd in the summer sun, to note;
Then fix'd in earnest gaze, and haply lost
In reverie profound, the swimming scene
Has danc'd before my eyes, a day-dream gay.
Time steals away the while, 'till starting up,
Full of the recollected sport, I seize
My gun, and with impatient voice arouse

My slumb'ring dog. Through the dark wood the sun
Streams his declining rays; on ev'ry side
The lengthen'd shadows fall, and Ev'ning waits
Impatient for the ling'ring Day's decrease.
Still through the echoing wood my gun resounds;
At intervals still falls the fated bird.
'Till in a verdant glade of wide extent,
With bushes skirted, and gigantic arms
Of loftiest trees half over-hung, I pause;
And whilst the setting sun sheds his last rays
Upon the waving wood, still try the chance
Th' allotted time permits. The sun has sunk
Beneath th' horizon, but full many a streak
Of brightest purple, in the western sky,

Still paints each object; their deep glowing hue,
By this keen air accompanied, denotes
Approaching Frost, whose secret unseen hand,
Long ere to-morrow's dawn gladdens the world,
Shall o'er the meads his hoary mantle spread.
Much do I love to take my sober way
Through the deep woods, on such an eve as this,
And mark the gradual change from red to grey,
In the clear ev'ning sky—reflected thence
On each surrounding object, 'till it sinks
Into one solid mass of dusky shade.
And oft to stop beneath the tow'ring trees,
Whose nodding heads in whisp'ring converse wave,
Whilst indistinctly seen, the flitting bat
Around my head his circling course pursues.

Thus through the winding shades as slow I pass,
The pheasant cockets, ere he seeks in sleep
To close his brilliant eye, whilst whistling sharp
In her descending flight his mate responds.
Now darker grow the woods. The friendly moon
Beams not for me to-night; but the bright stars
Twinkling, deny not their inferior aid.
Now many a sound throngs on the list'ning ear,
Peculiar to the night, its source unknown,
Whilst hoarse the night-owl croaks or screeches loud.
Far diff'rent is the lengthen'd strain that dwells
Oft on the moonlight scene. At such an hour
As this, creative Fear, with idle pow'r,
Peoples the forest with the murd'rous band,

That by the narrow path, in dingle deep,
Awaits the trav'ller's steps; nor yet content
With human horrors, from the world unknown,
With Superstition leagu'd, drags forth the forms
Of glaring spectres, and in ev'ry nook
And shadowy dell, the horrid phantoms plants.
Unhappy they, whose infant minds are left
Unguarded by a parent's fost'ring care
From vulgar Prejudice, whose baneful touch
No after season ever shall efface;
Half Nature's stores to them are lost: the night,
That soothes th' unfetter'd soul to sweet repose,
For them breeds horrors; and the shadowy woods,
For Contemplation's tranquil pleasures form'd,
Swarm with imagin'd monsters. Should their feet,
By cruel Fate constrain'd, tempt the deep gloom,

They hurry on bewilder'd and amaz'd;
With side-long glance, suspicious, eye their way,
Whilst their ear startles at each unknown sound,
Th' unwelcome voice of deep desponding ghosts,
Or evil demons that pursue their steps.
Far other feelings fill'd my placid breast,
As at this gap I pass'd at early morn.
My footsteps linger, whilst my faithful dog,
Advanc'd before, views me with doubtful eye,
Nor comprehends my meaning; 'till again
I move, and through the meads pursue my way.
Already has the frost with subtle touch
The bladed herbage crisp'd,—yet not the less,
To-morrow shall we wake the sounding woods,
And urge our vig'rous sport with fresh delight.

END OF BOOK III.

BOOK IV.

WOODCOCK SHOOTING.

CONTENTS.

Approach of Winter. Birds driven by the severity of the cold across the ocean. The passage of the woodcock. Often perishes through contrary winds. Appearance of fieldfares, plovers and starlings, foretells the season for woodcock shooting. The impatient fowler beats for woodcocks before their arrival. At length they come. Fine frosty evening. Examining the gun, and feeding the spaniels. Rising before day-break. Going out. Winter morning, and sun-rise. Rural sights and sounds. Viewing the ground to be beat, from the top of the hill. The woodcock's habits and haunts on his first coming. Putting the spaniels into the woods. Flushing and killing a woodcock. Beating through the woods. Reaching a sheltered, sunny spot between two woods. View from thence. Pursuing the sport 'till evening. Return home by moonlight. Hard frost. Resolution to make the most of the time. Woodcocks leave the woods, and repair to the cliffs on the southern coasts, in extreme frost. Reaching home, and farewell to the woods and their inhabitants for the night.

BOOK IV.

WOODCOCK SHOOTING.

How has great Nature's hand, that works unseen
Through the revolving seasons, chang'd the scene!
Stripp'd of its fruits and flow'rs and verdure gay,
Nor one autumnal beauty left, the Earth,
Wrapt in her dusky mantle, sees resign'd
Stern Winter's wayward reign commence. At first,
Chill rain incessant pouring, floods the fields;
And from opposing quarters mighty winds,
On the same errand bent, with busy hands,
Tear from the groaning woods the ling'ring leaves:

The rattling hail descends, undoubted pledge
Of frost and snow and tempest yet to come.
There are who view with melancholy eye
And sadden'd heart the scene, and sighing, breathe
The fervent wish for verdant Spring's return.
Not so the fowler—with keen glance he marks
The wint'ry landscape, and whilst busy thought
Runs o'er his varying sport, his joyous heart
Beats high, and dances to the sounding storm.
But should the rough north-east continuous blow,
A livelier hope inflates his eager soul:
For from the frozen north, where Winter's hand,
With sway despotic and untam'd, locks up
The shrinking world; o'er the wide ocean borne
On vig'rous wing, pour forth the feather'd tribes

Diverse and strange. In congregated flight
The woodcock comes, in milder climes to seek
A temporary refuge, from the jaws
Of wide devouring famine; all unskill'd
To dread the death that still his path pursues.
Nor will th' instinctive feeling always serve
Th' intended purpose, though he patient waits
The fav'ring gale, and right before it, steers
His steady course above the swelling waves.
Oft shifting from it's point, the faithless wind
Deserts him, or with adverse pow'r repels
His lab'ring wing. Ill fares it with him then,
On stormy seas mid-way surpris'd: no land
It's swelling breast presents, where safe reclin'd
His panting heart might find a short repose;
But wide around the hoarse-resounding seas

Meet his dim eye. Should some tall ship appear
High bounding o'er the waves, urg'd by despair,
He seeks the rocking masts, and throws him down
Amid the twisted cordage—thence repell'd,
If instant blows deprive him not of life,
He flutters weakly on, and drops at last,
Helpless and flound'ring in the whit'ning surge.
Yet not the perils of th' aerial voyage,
Nor varied death, that hovers on the shore
From guns, and nets, and hairy springes, serve
The fruitful race t' extirpate. When the year
Struggles to break from Winter's rough embrace,
And with a livelier vesture clothe the earth,
The woodcock musters on the sea-beat shore
His bands decreas'd. On some propitious day
He springs aloft, and through the pathless air

With course unerring, seeks his native shores.
Perchance in some Norwegian forest vast,
Beneath colossal pines and mingl'd firs,
Where murm'ring streams with fruitful current, wind
Again their wonted course, his old abode,
He plumes his spotted wing anew, and gives
His yielding heart to love: Fearless he roves
Amidst his feather'd family, 'till Fate
Coercive drive him forth to other lands,
In happy ign'rance of impending death.

As now the season comes, the fowler marks
Sagacious ev'ry change, and feeds his hopes
With signs predictive. On the leafless tree
The fieldfare sits, and his shrill note repeats

Monotonous. Loud o'er the shrivell'd heath
Whistles the plover, and along the meads
With busy bill the dusky starlings spread.

Impatient of restraint, he brooks no more
The long delay, but to the echoing wood
His loud-tongu'd spaniels takes, and toils, and tries
Each ferny thicket, and each miry swamp.
Thence bursting forth, he beats the furzy brakes
And shelter'd hedge-rows; nor forsakes the chace
'Till clear conviction satisfies his mind.
The sordid rustic with a promis'd fee
He bribes, should chance present before his sight
The wand'ring woodcock, instant to impart
The welcome news. Less anxious to receive

Intelligence of richly freighted ships
The merchant feels, than of th' expected flight
Th' impatient fowler. But at length they come;
And, scatt'ring o'er the land, inspire our breasts
With eager hope of recollected joys.
With gladden'd heart, I see the sun go down
In fiery pride, and leave the helpless world
To all the rigour of relentless frost;
And lighter move my steps o'er the crisp earth,
Whilst fast, and high, my mounting spirits rise.
Soon as the shades of night have veil'd the world,
I issue forth to view the heav'ns, and mark
Whence blows the wind. Unclouded are the heav'ns,
And from the north still blows the biting wind.
Ye deep incumbent fogs, and cheerless rains,

O keep far hence; nor with malignant pow'r,
Frustrate the promise of our jocund sport.
Now let us with due care examine well
The trusty gun; the polish'd lock explore
Through all its parts; and with the fine-edg'd flint
Fit well the bending cock, 'till the bright sparks
Descending fill the pan; precaution due.
Next to the kennel let us haste, to view
The spotted spaniels lap their sav'ry meal.
Thence to the friendly couch, invoking Sleep
Oblivious, to lock up the busy thoughts,
In kind forgetfulness of slow-pac'd time.
Ere the grey dawn breaks from the shadowy east,
Startling I wake, and springing from the couch,
In haste array me in my russet garb,

Descending by the taper's light, I take
My early silent meal—then haste away
In hollow woods, or deep entangl'd brakes,
Or winding vales, to pass the joyous day.
My spaniels clam'ring loud, awake the morn
With notes of joy, and leaping high, salute
With grateful tongue my hand, and frisk around
In sportive circles; 'till the loaded gun
Breaks off their idle play, and at my heels
Submiss they follow, and await the word
That bids them dash into the welcome woods.
Nor less delight my beating heart distends,
As with impatient stride I haste to gain
The destin'd ground. Yet can I not forbear
To gaze around, and mark the scene I love.
Sharp is the morning air, and not a cloud

Sullies the heavens, in whose highest cope
The rear of darkness slowly steals away;
Whilst sick'ning at the day, the morning star
Fades from the straining eye. And soon a glow
Springs in the changing east,—deep and more deep
The rosy colour grows, 'till it's great source,
The glorious sun, breaks on th' expecting world,
And throws a splendour o'er the wintry scene.
Now wakes the country round, and mingl'd sounds
Invade th' attentive ear, through the clear air
Unclogg'd by vapours, borne. The village cur,
Envious and quarrelsome, is loudest heard;
'Till with wide-flapping wings the screaming geese
Drown for a time his din. The sharp shrill voice

Of angry mother, to their coarse repast
Calling her straggling children, next succeeds.
Meantime, at intervals, the distant brook
Swells hoarsely in the breeze, and scarcely seems
A furlong distant. From the frosty fields,
The lowing herds welcome th' approaching swain,
With oaten burden heap'd upon his back.
Labour again pursues his varied task:
Let Sport his task with equal steps pursue.
O choicest season of the circling year,
Though ev'ry season has appropriate joys,
I hail thy presence! and my rapt'rous soul
Gives the full rein to joy. No burning sun
Now checks my speed, nor bathes in weak'ning dews
My fainting frame; but the keen bracing air

Fits me for vast and unremitting toil.
Let all the wint'ry stores that Nature owns,
Redoubling load the earth; nor sharpest frost,
Nor heaviest depth of snow, shall check my course,
Nor force me 'till the genial Spring's return,
To lay my gun aside. Nor is the sport
Less grateful than the season, ever new
And varying; whilst by piercing cold constrain'd,
And hunger's loud demands, from ev'ry point
The tenants of the woods and fields and floods
Within a narrower compass crowd, and oft,
From ling'ring death by no unfriendly fate
Reliev'd, increase the fowler's cheerful spoils.
On the hill top I pause, and cast around
O'er the wide varied scene a doubtful eye,

Uncertain where to tend. When first he comes
From his long journey o'er th' unfriendly main,
With weary wing the woodcock throws him down,
Impatient for repose, on the bare cliffs;
Thence with short flight the nearest cover seeks,
Low copse or straggling furze; 'till the deep woods
Invite him to take up his fixt abode.
Oft on the shelter'd side of some high hill,
If cruel frost bind not th' ungrateful soil,
Content he wanders, or beneath the shade
Of scatter'd hollies, turns with curious bill
The fall'n leaves, to find his hidden food.
When the thick shelter of the spreading woods
His wand'ring eye with friendly aspect tempts,
At morn and eve he seeks the limpid streams,

And springing thence, his stated flight he takes
By the dim light, through op'ning glades: there oft
The treach'rous net his rapid course cuts short,
And his fast flutt'ring pinions beat in vain.
But if with steep ascent he top the snare,
Or side-long 'scape it, through the wither'd ferns
He picks his silent way, or dozing lies
In the o'er-shadowing bush, till with keen nose
The ranging spaniel winds his close retreat,
And drives him forth, to meet the fowler's aim.

Where breaking into clumps, the scatter'd wood
First opens to the sun, and winding down
Between opposing hills, receives a stream
Whose bubbling fountain yields not to the force

Of keen invading frost, let us commence
Our earnest sport. Though silently we beat
At other seasons, let our joyful cheers,
In concert with the op'ning dogs, resound
" Hie in."—At that glad word away they dart,
And winding various ways, with careful speed
Explore the cover. Hark! that quest proclaims
The woodcock's haunt. Again! now joining all,
They shake the echoing wood with tuneful notes.
I heard the sounding wing—but down the wood
He took his flight. I meet him there anon.
As fast I press to gain the wish'd for spot,
On either side my busy spaniels try.
At once they wheel—at once they open loud,
And the next instant, flush th' expected bird.
Right up he darts amongst the mingling boughs;

But bare of leaves they hide not from my view
His fated form, and ere he can attain
Th' attempted height, with rapid flight to cleave
The yielding air, arrested by the shot,
With shatter'd wing revers'd and plumage fair
Wide scatt'ring in the wind, headlong he falls.
The pliant branches to his weight give way,
And the hard frozen ground his fall returns.
See how the joyful dogs exulting, press
Around the prostrate victim, nor presume
With lawless mouths to tear his tender skin.
Obedient to my voice, one lightly brings
The lifeless bird, and lays it at my feet.
Thus oft when skimming o'er some thorny brake,
Struck by the shot, the wounded bird has dropt
Full in its centre, through the tangl'd briars

The trusty dog his painful passage works,
Nor leaves, 'till from the dark abyss he drags,
The flutt'ring prey, and yields it to my hand.
" Forward again." Long is our beat to-day,
And unremitting. Merrily we trace
The winding vales, and through the forest brush;
Upon the bord'ring plain emerging oft,
We swiftly glide along, then plunge again
Into the woody labyrinth profound;
Whilst Echo, starting from her hollow seat,
With babbling voice reverberates our course.
Sport o'er our jovial toils presides, and fans
The ardent flame that in our bosom glows.
Now granting, now denying to our hope
The threaten'd bird, enhancing thus the prize,
'Till with increas'd delight, the feather'd spoil

Fills high our breast, and rocks, and woods and
streams,
Steep hill, or precipice abrupt, appear
As smooth and easy as the new-mown mead.
There is a narrow path that leads athwart
Th' entangl'd shade, conducting to the brow
Of a steep hill, betwixt two mighty woods,
Itself o'erspread with trees of humbler growth,
And skirted round with hollies, furze, and shrubs
Of meaner kind. Upon that favor'd spot
Shines the warm sun, and as a kindly screen,
The forest fences the rough northern blast.
Deep in the vale below, a riv'let winds
It's interrupted way through moss and mire.
To gain that spot I haste: there oft success
Has crown'd my warmest wishes, and if Fate

Forbid not, shall this happy morn
Crown them again. The dogs shall range around,
Wide as they list; for not a wing shall start
From the close shelt'ring cover unobserv'd.
Beneath the crooked branches, stooping low,
I win my eager way, and reach at length
My well-known station. From their warm retreat
On ev'ry side th' affrighted woodcocks burst,
Bird after bird, whilst frequent death o'ertakes
Their intercepted flight, and darting down
Deep in th' opposing wood, the rest I mark.
Now, the surrounding ground well clear'd, we call
The panting dogs to heel, and ere we drive
Precipitate into the woods again,
With short cessation mark the subject scene.
Well may we pause to-day! may Fortune smile

As kindly on each fowler's gen'rous toils,
As she has done on ours! and many a one
E'en now her favor courts; for wide around
The country echoes with the mingl'd noise
Of dogs and guns, and far resounding cheers.
On yonder hill a fowler meets my eye,
Where, spreading wide its navigable wave,
The winding river severs in its course
The kindred soil,—diminish'd to a dwarf
Himself,—his dogs as dwarfish, and the smoke
That issues from his gun, long time precedes
The faint report. How grateful is the beam
Of the meridian sun, that cheers the world
With no intemp'rate warmth! All nature owns
His sov'reignty benign, and where he points
His condescending ray, the mourning Earth

Smiles faintly, whilst his icy gripe awhile,
Stern Winter half relaxes. Were it not
For the bare forest, and the sallow fields,
Their wither'd herbage sprinkl'd o'er with frost,
The wanton smile of Summer might be deem'd
To play upon yon azure wave, where rides
The vessel whose gay flag descends in folds
From the high top-mast, by no breeze disturb'd.
Yet far more grateful now the rudest scene
Of the rough season to the fowler's eye,
Presaging all the fulness of his sport.
No more we linger here, but rushing down,
Deep through the dusky woods pursue our way.
The woods again resound; whilst wand'ring wide
O'er hill and vale, by many a frozen pool
Or trickling stream, from hour to hour we urge

The varying chace, 'till on the western edge
Of a gigantic forest, whose deep shade
Now glimmers in the fading light, we end
Reluctantly the day, and turn our steps
Tow'rds our far distant home. Yet shall the way
Seem short, by many a pleasing thought beguil'd,
Of recollected or of future sport.
Night steals upon the world with silent step
And rapid, but in vain she spreads around
Her envious gloom; the glitt'ring stars invade
Her sullen pow'r, and soon the welcome moon
Shall reign triumphant o'er the subject world.
E'en now I mark her first pale beam appear
Between the trees, most like the trembling ray
Of taper, in the cottage window plac'd.
But broader soon it swells upon the sight,

With pleasing majesty confess'd, and drives
Far o'er the rugged hills the frowning shades.
Now with invisible but steady hand,
Obdurate Frost his busy labour plies,
And walking o'er the trembling earth, repairs
The ruins of the day, by the warm sun
Effected, or invading foot of man,
Or beast. The floating fragments he collects
And firmly fixes; on the straggling stream
He lays his pow'rful hand with added force,
And it becomes ere morn a glitt'ring bridge.
E'en the loud rushing cataract he robs
Of half his waters, and to uncouth forms
Converting, hangs them to the slipp'ry rocks.
Shrill cries the snipe beneath the friendly moon,
Wand'ring to find the springs, constrain'd to quit

The long frequented marsh, whose rushy pools,
Lock'd up in ice, repel his searching bill.
The heav'ns, the earth, and the keen air foretell
Severer cold. The menace I despise,
And triumph in my winter-harden'd frame,
And quick unwearied step, that bids the blood
With lively current circle through my veins.
Unhappy he, who on the slipp'ry road
Bestrides his stagg'ring steed, and vainly strives
To fence him from the keen opposing blast,
Whose searching breath benumbs his shiv'ring limbs:
And, oft alighting, by the bridle drags
His starting, trembling beast. No ice retards
My steady course; but cheerfully I pass
Along the destin'd way, and pleas'd, revolve

Full many a promis'd pleasure yet to come.
Nor must a day be lost. Ere the stern frost
Has ev'ry stream in icy fetters bound,
We must ensure the sport. The woodcock then
Forsakes the barren woods, forsakes the meads,
And southward wings his way, by Nature taught
To seek once more the cliffs that overhang
The murm'ring main. There oft th' unfrozen rill,
Moist'ning the scanty soil, full in the beam
Of the warm sun his eager eye invites,
And kindly cherishes his feeble frame.
Then flag the fowler's joys, when frowning rocks
Forbid approach, and scarce the clamb'ring dogs
Can gain a footing; whilst the birds discern
Far off their forms, and flit from crag to crag,

Mocking the vain pursuit. But when again,
His fiercest fury spent, the Winter checks
His deep career, and sullenly withdraws
With intermitting hand his icy chains
From the desponding streams, the woodcock leaves
His unbelov'd abode and scanty fare,
And flies him to the shelt'ring woods, in search
Of his old fruitful haunts; where feeding full,
He renovates his strength, prepar'd to take,
If Fate prevent him not, his painful voyage
With hardier wing across the swelling seas.
Then lose we not a day. To-morrow's dawn
Shall light us to the woods, intent to swell
With honest pride the triumphs of the year,
Through ev'ry season. We have yet in store

Succeeding joys; to chace the wav'ring snipe,
And, by the river's side, whose rapid falls
Deride the baffl'd frost, the various tribes
Web-footed, 'till the circling year bring in
The smiling Spring again, and bid us change
The solid gun, for the light bending rod
And silken line—Thus Sport shall still preside
O'er ev'ry hour that Exercise and Health
Can justly claim. Now welcome to my view
My humble home,—the cheerful blazing fire
More welcome still, and soon prepar'd repast.
Yon dog that bays the moon with ceaseless din,
Proclaims that home not distant; now it gleams
In the pale moon-beam, and a few short steps
Conduct me to the ready op'ning gate.
Ye frozen woods, and fields, and streams, farewell!

And you ye feather'd tenants, for the night!
Enough for me, with joyous eye to view
Your lifeless fellows; whilst inspiring Hope
Shall deem the grateful spoil a certain pledge
Of dear delightful pleasures yet to come.

END OF BOOK IV.

BOOK V.

SNIPE SHOOTING,

DUCK SHOOTING, &c.

CONTENTS.

Appearance of the country in the depth of Winter. Snipe-shooting, and snow-showers. Evening, and return home. Female villagers with gathered wood. Inhumanity of some rich people reprobated. Invocation of sleep. Rising before day, and going to the river. Shooting at a flock of wild-ducks. Increase of day-light. Pushing forward—sun-rise, and splendid appearance of the river, and the country. Various kinds of shooting through the day. Return home at the close of day. The fowlers' fire-side, alone, or with a family. Company of brother sportsmen. Encomium on rural sports. The ease and security of a country life. Self-congratulation, and prospective views of life. Contempt of the luxuries of life. The sportsman's grave. Address to Nature, and conclusion.

BOOK V.

SNIPE SHOOTING,

DUCK SHOOTING, &c.

Now has stern Winter rear'd his icy throne
High o'er the prostrate world, and reigns uncheck'd
In gorgeous majesty severely bright:
Beneath his furious sway, the trembling earth
Submissive sinks; hill, vale, and wood, and stream,
Smiling and vocal once, now mute and sad.
High rise the glitt'ring mounts of drifted snow
With curling top. The pointed ice depends

Frequent and full from many a solid base.
Transform'd the country stands. The trav'ller shrinks,
Dreading his unknown way; e'en they, who us'd
Beneath the Summer sun to wander wild
Thro' flow'ry meads, or high o'er-arching woods,
Or by the murm'ring riv'let's mossy bank,
Now dread the open plain, or public road,
Beset with dangers to their fearful eye.
The fowler mocks their fears, nor dreads to tempt
The threat'ning scene, o'er levell'd hills to pass,
And frozen streams conceal'd, and woods disguis'd.
And does there for the fowler's hopes remain
A sport at this wild season? Yes there does;
Though of the feather'd tribes by Famine's gripe

Fall multitudes, gasping in rocky caves
And hollow trees, their little lives away.
The snipe, though sorely pinch'd, and half
reduc'd
In bulk, still braves the year; with prying bill
Bores the light cover'd stream, and should it fail,
By hunger tam'd, drops in the trickling drain
Near dreaded man's abode. A lively sport
Affording to the fowler's varying hand,
As wheeling, oft returns, though often sprung,
The noisy bird. But a far nobler spoil
Awaits him on the river; where the rocks
Aiding the roaring stream, it keeps at bay
The eager frost, and many a broken pool,
Half liquid and half solid, forms; the haunt
Of all the kindred tribes that love to cleave

With glossy breast and paddling feet the flood;
Widgeon, or teal, or duck,—majestic swan,
Or heavy goose—with many a fowl beside
Of lesser size and note, who, when the world
Has sunk to rest, beneath the moon-beam dash
The sparkling tide. To-day we spring the snipe,
And with an eye as keen as does the bird
Himself, by hunger's strongest law compell'd,
Explore each shelter'd drain, or hollow ditch.
Curl'd on their warm and strawy beds, repose
My dogs, save two, whose coats sable and white,
And speckl'd legs, and tail well fring'd, and ears
Of glossy silken black, declare their kind,
By land or water, equally prepar'd
To work their busy way. My steps alone
These follow in the depth of Winter's reign.

O'er many a mead, and many a marsh we pass,
Deep frozen; 'till at length we reach a moor:
Fast by a village, where at morn and eve
The herds, in search of drink, with pond'rous feet
Have pierc'd the rushy pools. With flatt'ring wing
Rises the clam'rous wisp—scatt'ring at first
In all directions, but when high in air
Again unites, and wheels its wav'ring flight.
Oft on the shining hill they seem to drop,
And almost brush the snows; then rise again;
As quickly to the vale once more descend;
'Till now in narrower circles round the moor,
Unwilling to forsake their fav'rite haunt,
They skim, then dart with rapid wing at once
Among the rushes,—but relentless Fate

Demands a victim, and the thund'ring gun
Soon executes the stern decree—he falls,
And stains the virgin snow with crimson gore.
At the dread sound again they mount aloft,
Affrighted sore, nor with so quick return
The dang'rous ground reseek, but fall around
Beneath the sunny hedges.—Vain resource!
Soon shall we beat them up: but see, to glad
Our heart, those gath'ring clouds in the dun east
Presaging snow. Before the swelling breeze
They drive along, and blot the azure heav'ns,
And blot the fading sun. Now the thin flakes
Descending float around, but soon increase,
'Till all the mazy scene swims loosely round.
I hail the fall, my only care to keep
My priming dry: for hark! the snipes distress'd,

on the wing again, and hither bend
ir unpropitious way. Beneath this hedge
en we ourselves and dogs—close o'er our head
birds will skim: they come, compact and
close;
en instant 'mid their ranks the whistling shot
eads dire destruction. Various is their fate;
e lifeless fall, others, with flutt'ring wing
empt, in vain, to rise again in air;
soon one common fate involves them all;
ir poor remains of life my ready hand
h expeditious mercy seizes. Thus we urge
joyous sport, whilst others shiv'ring view
m smoky dwellings the wild Winter's day,
l early darkness creeps upon the scene:
n slowly leave the moor, resolv'd to seek

By earliest break of day, the river's side.
The snow has ceas'd to fall: the gloomy clouds,
Retiring like disbanded troops, disperse
In all directions, and leave Heavn's wide plain
Free, for the glitt'ring stars their num'rous bands
Irregular to muster. Frost his rage
Abates not; but with persevering spleen
Stiffens the new-fall'n snow. The village pours
From ev'ry chimney volumes of thick smoke,
From the dry faggot or the close par'd turf
Arising, of more pure and wholesome scent
Than the rank coal sulphureous. Happy they,
Whose scanty cottage holds within its walls
The ready fuel pil'd; they need not brave
The season's fury, from the furzy brake,
Or frozen wood, with hands benumb'd, to pick,

And shiv'ring limbs ill guarded from the cold,
The casual branch strewed by the wint'ry wind.
For see yon motley crew advancing slow,
Beneath their burdens on the slipp'ry road;
Nor male nor female their uncouth attire,
But ill compos'd of each,—female their sex.
Various their ages—by the stooping side
Of feeble matron, walks with vig'rous step,
In the full bloom of youth, the buxom maid;
The quilted petticoat, once glossy bright,
Rusty and soil'd, and streaming to the wind,
Denotes them best; for on their shoulders hangs
The faded coat, with gorgeous buttons once
Thick studded; now but one remains alone,
To guard it from desertion. The flapp'd hat,
Rejected by the lordly husband, rent

Disastrously; nor can we spare to sigh
At the dishonour'd scarlet, faint and wan,
And stript of all appendages; though once
With innate pride of British valour, worn
On the thick tented plain, nor e'er design'd
For such ignoble use. Laborious hand!
Full hardly have you earn'd the scanty means
Of a short hour of needful ease and warmth.
But lives there, righteous Heav'n, th' unpitying man,
Who, blest with all that fortune can bestow,
Forbids the shiv'ring villager to take
The useless refuse?—locks his guarded gates
Without remorse; and should an hapless foot
Upon his parks intrude, enrag'd; lets loose
His upstart menials on the trembling wretch?

Ah! can the sparkling glass be sweet to him?
Can his proud fires impart a pleasing warmth?
Or can he, on his downy pillow, place
His weary head, expecting calm repose?
Repose, the wisest and the sweetest gift
That lib'ral Nature grants, rend'ring more fair
The fairest morn. Come, gentle pow'r, bind up
My busy wand'ring thoughts in welcome chains!
The shadowy Night has nearly run her course
Over the silent world—the cock repeats
His warning note. Behoves us to prepare
For our expected sport. Now, when the stars
Slowly decrease, and the faint glimm'ring light
First trembles in the east, we hasten forth,
To seek the rushing river's wand'ring wave.
The doubtful gloom shall favor our approach,

And should we through th' o'erhanging bushes, view
The dim-discovered flock, the well-aim'd shot
Shall have insur'd success, nor leave the day
To be consum'd in vain. For shy the game,
Nor easy of access: the fowler's toils
Precarious; but inur'd to ev'ry chance
We urge those toils with glee. E'en the broad sun,
In his meridian brightness, shall not check
Our steady labour; for some rushy pool,
Some hollow willowy bank, the skulking birds
May then conceal, which our staunch dogs shall pierce,
And drive them clam'ring forth. Those tow'ring rocks,

With nodding wood o'erhung, that faintly break
Upon the straining eye, descending deep,
A hollow basin form, the which receives
The foaming torrent from above. Around
Thick alders grow. We steal upon the spot
With cautious step, and peering out, survey
The restless flood. No object meets our eye.
But hark! what sound is that approaching near?
"Down close"—The wild-ducks come, and darting down,
Throw up on ev'ry side the troubl'd wave:
Then gaily swim around with idle play.
With breath restrain'd, and palpitating heart,
I view their movements, whilst my well-taught dogs,
Like lifeless statues crouch. Now is the time.

Closer they join; nor will the growing light
Admit of more delay—With fiery burst,
The unexpected death invades the flock;
Tumbling they lie, and beat the flashing pool,
Whilst those remoter from the fatal range
Of the swift shot, mount up on vig'rous wing,
And wake the sleeping echoes as they fly.
Quick on the floating spoil my spaniels rush,
And drag them to the shore. Where now is Doubt,
Or Disappointment? For the day we bid
Defiance to their pow'r, and yield our soul
To all the fulness of successful sport.
Now forward shall we press with hasty step;
The sounding gun has, doubtless, driven far off
Each neighb'ring wing. But many a winding vale

May yet be travers'd, ere the sun shall sink
Beneath the western hills. The growing light
Opens the wint'ry scene, and soon the sun
With cheerful beam shall meet us. Now the heav'ns
Foretell his near approach, and now he drives
His ruby car along the eastern sky.
What pen or pencil shall presume to draw
The glowing scene—the rosy hue that paints
The glist'ning snow, the fiery gleams that flash
From chrystal icicles, that deck the rocks
Or hoary willow's roots, and with a flood
Of brightest splendour light the river up.
Now wand'ring by the river's winding side
Its mazy course we trace, explore each creek,
Islet or shelter'd cove, the wild fowl's haunt.

Oft crossing on the solid ice we change
Our shifting course, whilst various Sport repays
Our toils. The coot escapes not, nor the shy
And cunning rail; nor fail we to surprize
The teal and widgeon oft. Some prey rewards
Our progress, 'till once more the sun inflames
With redd'ning beams the scene; then o'er the hills,
With heart elate and lightsome step, pursue
Our nearest homeward path. Let the loud winds
Whistle without, the clatt'ring hail descend,
Or snowy tempest drive, and, ere the morn,
Cover the sloping thatch; the fowler loves
The sound, enjoys his blazing hearth the more;
And ease well purchas'd by the daily toil.
Nor idly pass the ling'ring hours of eve.

Music and books, due interchange, beguile
The fleeting time, if not more blest his lot,
With sweet domestic joys refin'd and pure.
The faithful partner, and the youthful throng,
Blooming with rosy health, whose loud surprise
Calls forth a smile, as, crowding roun,d they view
With wond'ring eyes the various spoils outspread.
And oft he summons to his social board
His brother sportsmen, and devotes the hours
To harmless Mirth, and chasten'd Jollity;
Whilst each, in turn, runs o'er the rapid tale
Of many a sportive day—his hopes, his fears,
His troubles, or his joys; and, joining, oft
They plan some enterprize of greater weight,
Some scene of distant sport,—protracted march,
And unremitting toil, remote from home.

Thus merrily, with tale or song, they chace
The hours of night, unconscious of their flight.

O dear delights, O joys for ever new!
What can express your worth? The miser views
His hoarded gold, nor dares to taste its use.
Ambition's vot'ry climbs the toilsome path
To win the giddy height, but wins it not;
Or won, unsafe he stands, and swiftly hurl'd,
By fickle Fortune's quick revolving wheel,
Into the former depth. Grov'lling and gross,
The sensualist perverts the choicest gifts
That Nature yields him; sottishly destroys
The pow'rs of life, and cuts existence short.
And, mid the mighty multitude, how few
The joys of reason and of sense unite!

Whilst narrow Bigotry, and cynic Pride
Enslave the fetter'd mind. Spleen sours the heart,
And opes a path for Envy, baleful hag.
Then oft more happy they, whose friendly fate,
Beyond the human whirlpool's vortex dire,
Has set them safely down; and happier still
Who love the sylvan sport, that cheers the mind
With sweet diversion, and with bounteous health
Endues the sprightly frame. And e'en those ills,
By sov'reign wisdom far above the ken
Of scanty human knowledge, doom'd to be
Th' inevitable lot of mortal man,
It mitigates and soothes; whilst lighter cares
Before its influence, like the driving mists,
Disperse and vanish. Ever blest the Fate,

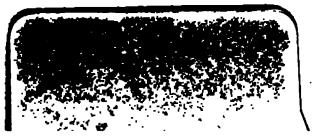
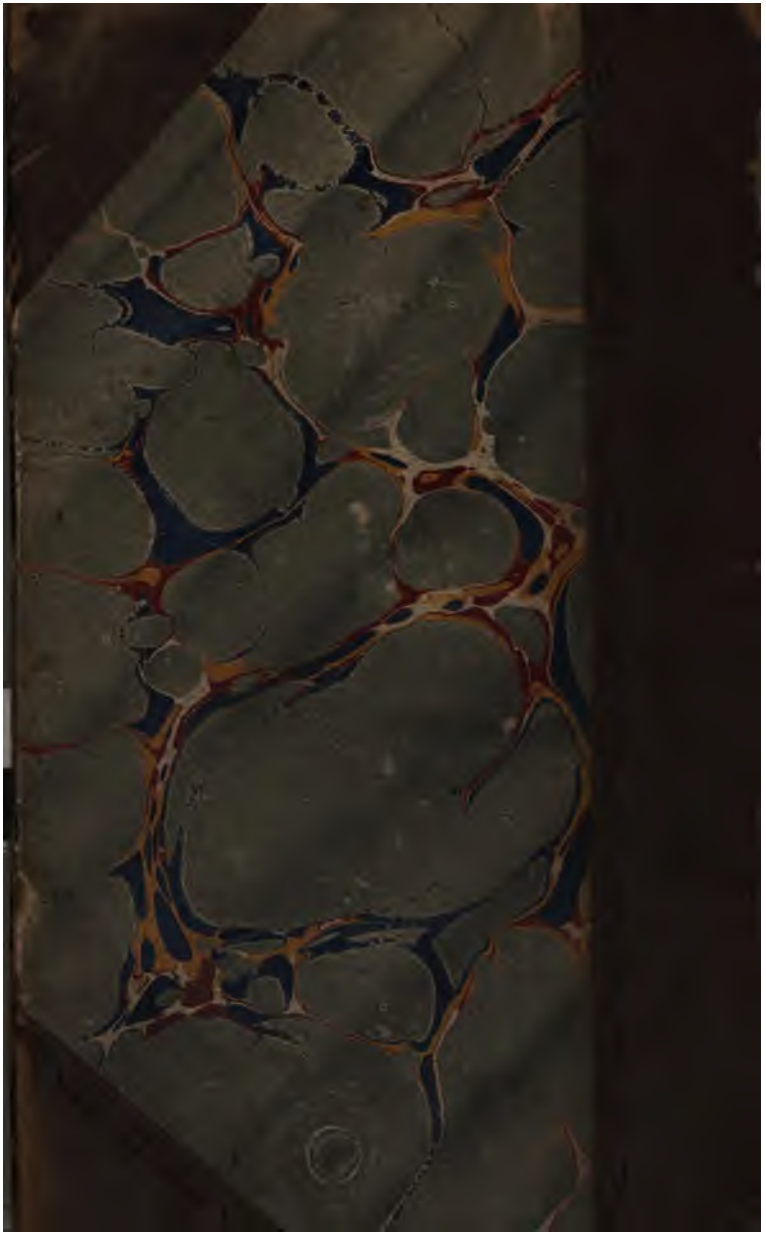
That gave me in the rural scene to draw
My infant breath—that led my childish feet
O'er hill and valley, by the glassy stream,
Or through the wild wood's shade: to brave the heat
Of scorching Summer, and to dare the rage
Of Winter loud and fierce; o'er drifted snows
Fearless to rove, and tempt the sounding ice!
Whence, smitten with the love of ev'ry sport
The varied country yields, my youthful heart
Receiv'd impressions, which the hand of Time
Shall ne'er efface. Chief when the sounding gun
Stopp'd in his mid career the wheeling bird,
And brought it to the earth; resemblance meet
Of the sulphureous flash that fires the heav'ns.
Amid the rural scene still be it mine

To pass my peaceful days. No pop'lous town,
Noisy and gay, of lofty buildings proud,
With sculpture grac'd, possesses charms for me.
More grateful to my eye the mountain rock,
Worn by the hand of Time, that frowning bends
O'er the low grassy vale, the sweeping wood,
And river winding swift its murmuring way;
Nor the fantastic luxuries of life
My sober wishes move. No tinsell'd robe
Excites my envy—far more dear to me,
The homely russet garb, in which through woods
Of kindred hue my joyous sport I urge.
And can the costly perfumes, which the light
And fickle voice of Fashion loads with praise,
Vie with the breath of morn, o'er thymy hills
And flow'ry meadows wafted? What bright gem

Can match the blazing sun, from which it draws
Its imitative ray? And who, that feels
Nature's invigorating pow'r, regrets
The sumptuous banquet, which rewards the guests
With many a dire distemper, oft with death? 315
But, height of human vanity! to prize
The sculptur'd monument, in fretted aisle
With ostentatious grandeur rais'd aloft,
Exalting the vain perishable dust,
E'en at the soul's expence! When Heav'n
requires 320
The spirit which it gave, a verdant turf,
Beside some low and simple village spire,
Haply in woody vale with mountains girt,
The scene of harmless joys, my relics shroud.
The early sportsman oft may view the spot, 325

And kindly breathe the charitable wish;
The sun at least may smile, the dews of Heav'n
Softly descend; and Nature's gentle voice
Oft whisper sweetly o'er the grassy mound.
Nature! admir'd and lov'd! with thee began
The sportive strain, with thee the strain shall end.

Is there who, dead to feeling, never heard
Thy sweet inviting voice, that gently calls
To pleasures ever new—for whom thine hand
Has deck'd the seasons, the green budding Spring,
The glowing Summer, Autumn rich in fruits,
And Winter clad in ermine robe, in vain?
Can the sweet breath of flow'rs, the song of birds,
The waving forest, and the murm'ring stream,
Inspire no soft delight? The tow'ring rock,

Or foaming torrent, or the dazzling sight
Of wint'ry splendour, raise no sacred awe?
Unhappy is his fate, though Fortune show'r,
Her envied favors thick upon his head!
O great and beautiful in all thy works,
In ev'ry season and in ev'ry scene!
May the life-blood, that circles round my heart,
Forget to flow when I forget thy praise,
Or fail to seek thee with industrious foot
In all thy varied walks; whilst Sport shall throw
O'er all thy charms a lovelier brighter grace.

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